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**MORE WTO MEMBERS TAKE STEPS FOR ENTRY INTO FORCE  
OF GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGREEMENT**

The majority of WTO members who missed an earlier deadline (seven of thirteen countries) have now taken the necessary steps for their market opening commitments on telecommunications services to enter into force. The enrollment of these seven countries (Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Poland and Romania) brings the number of participating countries to sixty-four WTO members that have now committed to the terms of this agreement. This is the final step necessary to lock in commitments to open global markets in this \$675 billion industry.

United States Trade Representative Ambassador Barshefsky stated, "The WTO basic telecommunications agreement, in its first six months of operation, has already led to lower prices and better service for U.S. users of international telecommunications networks. It is ushering in a wave of new investment and job-creation in this sector, both in the United States and among our trade partners. This will provide the infrastructure for the global information economy of the next century.@"

The seventy parties to the agreement include sixty-nine distinct territorial entities, of which fifteen are E.U. Member States, and the E.U. Presidency at the time (Luxembourg), on behalf of the European Communities. In adding seven additional WTO members that have formally obligated themselves under the agreements, over 92% of WTO member telecom revenue is now represented on the global pact. The number of late parties declined to thirteen in January, and now has declined to six. The U.S. will continue to pressure these governments to fulfill their earlier commitments.

It is essential that all the parties to the agreement formally meet their commitments in writing, and we are following up with them to assure that result. In the meantime, with the adoption of the Declaration on Electronic Commerce at the WTO Ministerial meeting in May, including duty free cyberspace, the United States and its fellow WTO members are on course to assure the predictable and stable environment that is vital to the growth of electronic commerce and telecommunications," said Ambassador Barshefsky